

1859-013  
Lee Co.

Chancery Causes: William L. Stubblefield vs John B. Proffitt &

John ~ Crockett

CA- Contract Dispute  
T- Slavery  
Property



To the Worshippful The county Court of Lee  
County in chancery sitting. The bill of  
complaint of William L. Stubblefield  
respectfully represents that on the day of  
Sept 1846 your orator married the daugh-  
ter of John B. Proffitt a resident of Hawkins  
County Tennessee and the said Proffitt <sup>afterwards</sup> gave  
your orator a negro child named John then  
about four years old. Your orator brought  
the said negro child to Jonesville Lee County Va  
where he resided and retained the possession  
of said negro about three years. Your  
orators said wife died about the day of March  
1854 leaving <sup>two of whom are still living</sup> ~~three~~ children, the grandchildren  
of said Proffitt <sup>two of whom</sup> ~~are~~ are still living. After  
the death of your orators said wife the said  
John B. Proffitt about the day of August 1855  
paid your orator a visit at Jonesville and upon  
taking leave of your orator he importuned your  
orator to pay him the said Proffitt a visit at  
his the said Proffitts residence in Tennessee  
and to bring the said negro boy John also to  
see its mother who desired very much to see  
it and he the said Proffitt pressed the said  
invitation, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> your orator promised to  
go to see him the said Proffitt at a time  
specified and according to promise your  
orator, believing that the said Proffitt was  
sincere in his expressions of friendship and  
paternal attachment, went over to the residence  
of said Proffitt in Tennessee to pay him the  
said visit and took the boy John along to see  
his mother, where to the utter astonishment



of your orator the said Droffitt run the said  
boy John off and refused to deliver the said  
negro to your orator upon your orators return  
home and has converted your orators said  
negro to his the said Droffitts own use by  
reason whereof the said Droffitt has become  
liable to your orator for the value of your  
orators said negro and your orator avers that  
his said negro is worth seven hundred dollars  
which sum the said John B Droffitt owes and  
is indebted to your orator for said negro which  
he has retained and converted to his own use  
as aforesaid and the object of this suit is  
to obtain a decree against the said John B  
Droffitt who is a non resident of this Common-  
wealth for the value of said negro and to subject  
the effects of said Droffitt within the jurisdiction  
of this court to the payment of your orators said  
debt. Your orator would further state that  
he has reason to believe that Stephen S Crockett  
is indebted to said John B Droffitt but what the  
amount of indebtedness is your orator does not  
know ~~The said John B Droffitt also avers~~

~~as James with which the sheriff can get~~  
~~reference of~~ Your orator also on the day  
of 1854 executed a note to the said  
Droffitt for the sum of \$100.00 payable on  
the day of 18 on which your  
orator has paid \$10.00 and the balance of  
said note and interest your orator owes  
the said Droffitt ~~all~~ <sup>with all the</sup> effects of the  
said Droffitt known to your orator within

the jurisdiction of the court subject to  
foreign attachment and your orator  
being without an adequate remedy at  
Common law and relievable only in a  
Court of equity His prayer therefore is that  
the said John B Droffitt & Stephen S Crockett  
be made party Defts to this bill and be  
required to make full true and perfect  
answer thereto on oath ~~That the sheriff~~  
~~of this county be ordered to take possession of~~  
~~said~~

~~the property of said John B Droffitt and hold the~~  
~~same subject to the future decree of the court~~  
That the said Deft Stephen S Crockett be  
restrained by said order from paying conveying  
away or ~~disposing of in any way~~ <sup>disposing of in any way</sup> the debts by him owing to  
or the effects in his hands belonging to said  
absent Deft Droffitt until the further  
order of the Court That by the said order  
of your Honships the said absent Deft  
Droffitt be restrained from proceeding  
to collect the said debt due from your  
orator to the said Droffitt until the  
matters herein contained can be fully heard  
and adjudicated. That an order of  
publication be made against said absent  
Defendant Droffitt. That upon a final  
hearing of the Case a decree be rendered  
by your Honships in favour of your orator  
against said absent Deft Droffitt for the  
amount of your orators said debt interest and  
costs subject to deductions for the amount of  
said debts and effects of said Droffitt within the  
jurisdiction of the court and that such other and



further relief be extended by your worships to  
 your orator in the premises as to justice and equity  
 belongs and is suited to his case. May it please  
 your worships to grant the counsellor's writ of Habeas Corpus  
 Name

Lee County Court

This day Wm L Stubblefield personally came  
 before me the undersigned a justice of said County and  
 made oath that the statements contained in the  
 foregoing bill are true so far as they depend upon his  
 own knowledge and that so far as they depend upon  
 the information derived from others he believes them  
 to be true given under my hand this 20 day of  
 July 1857

A. N. Dickinson JP

Wm L. Stubblefield

VS Bill

John B. Proffitt &c

1857 July terms Bill filed  
 and in junction

22.

Sept. granted  
 Aug. Term. 1858, Impunction is  
 this day dissolved  
 Oct. court in, Dec. 1858,  
 1. 2. continued  
 1. 2. continued  
 1. 2. continued

17.00

Filed to Sep. 1866, old Sub Book 202



The answer of John B. Proffitt to the bill of  
complaint of William L. Stubblefield filed  
against him in the County Court in Chancery  
in the County of Lee, State of Virginia

This Respondent saving  
the usual benefit of exception &c. for answer  
to so much of said Bill as he is advised  
it is material for him to answer unto,  
Answers and says - That it true that the complain-  
ant married the daughter of ~~this~~ Respondent  
about the time stated in the Bill but it is  
utterly untrue that Respondent gave to the  
complainant the negro boy John mentioned  
in the Bill nor did Respondent ever have  
any intention of giving the said slave  
to complainant as Respondent had  
no confidence in him - The truth in relation  
to said slave is this. he was given verbally  
to John Proffitt Stubblefield, a son of complain-  
ant and grandson of Respondent and given  
to him on account of his having the name  
of Respondent. After the death of the daughter  
of Respondent who had married the  
said complainant and after the death  
of one of the children of complainant who  
had died at the house of Respondent and  
whose funeral was to be preached there,  
Respondent went to Lee County Virginia  
to complainant's house and the complain-  
ant appointed the time when he would come  
to the funeral of his child at Respondent's  
in the County of Shenandoah Tennessee,



When the complainant came over to the funeral  
from Respondent said to him that he wanted  
some statement from Complainant, in  
writing, that the negro boy John should at  
the time that Respondent's grandson John  
bought of age go to him - at this Complainant  
became offended - and very soon left the  
house of Respondent. This proposition was  
made by Respondent because it was proper  
in itself and was carrying out his intent  
- in which he first let the negro John go into  
the hands of Complainant for his said son.  
And Respondent believed that it was  
unsafe to trust property in the hands of  
Complainant - It is untrue that Respondent  
and any stranger to go possession  
of the negro boy John. Respondent did not  
ask Complainant to bring the boy at all nor  
did he know he was to come when Respondent  
was talking on the next day with Complainant  
about the negro boy John who had been left  
at Respondent's house. Complainant  
stated that he never had any title  
to the said negro and that Respondent  
had the right to have taken him away  
where - Complainant always knew well that  
he had no right to the said negro.

Respondent further accounting  
says that Complainant owes him the balance  
on the note received by him and mentioned  
in the Bill which note was given for a buggy.  
and to which he has often promised to pay it &  
now denied its justice, but finally said he

pay it when it suited him - when suit was  
brought to collect the note Complainant  
Complainant files a bill for a negro to which  
he never had the shadow of a claim and  
when the said negro has been in possession of  
Respondent for about two years - where  
Respondent intend to keep him that he may  
go his grandson or his sister and not be squar-  
-ded by Complainant. Respondent  
has answered all the material charges  
of said Bill fully - and will claim the  
benefit of a demurrer as if the same  
was formally drawn out -

Respondent repeats  
that his only object in retaining the ownership  
& possession of the said negro is for the benefit  
of his grandson or granddaughter, rather  
than to permit the negro to go into the  
hands of Complainant who has so far given  
no evidence of his ability to retain & make  
property. Respondent feels that in his own  
hands the negro is safe and that he has  
the right to his possession & will retain it -

Noted and filed  
Collectors

State of Tennessee, this day personally appeared  
Hawkins County, one the undersigned - J. B. Proffitt

J. B. Proffitt the Respondent  
in the foregoing answer and under oath in due form  
of law, that the facts therein stated are true to the  
best of his knowledge, information & belief  
sworn to & subscribed before

me 24<sup>th</sup> Decr 1857  
J. H. Hamilton of

J. B. Proffitt



John B. Crockett

Adm. J. Anderson

W. L. Stubblefield

1857 Sept. And. filed